10
The Fragrant Flower Blooms With Dignity
SAKA MIKAMI

I have time this Sunday at noon!

Thanks, I'll tell them.

And let me know when your train will be there, I'll come pick you up.

Okay, thanks!

...

...

THAT'S SO LIKE HIM...

KA

THUNK

Chapter 74: Proper Greeting

WHICH OF THESE TWO DO YOU THINK WOULD BE BETTER?!

HEEEY, SUBA-RU!!

RUSTLE ばた

RUSTLE ばた

SHOULD I JUST DRESS THE SAME WAY I USUALLY WOULD?!

RUSTLE ばた

RUSTLE ばた

OR MAYBE I SHOULD GO FOR A MORE PROPER LOOK THIS TIME AROUND?!

In a set!

OH, NO! WHAT DO I DO ABOUT MY HAIR?!

I THINK YOU LOOK GREAT IN ALL OF THEM!

AND SHE'S NOT LISTENING, EITHER.

WE'VE BEEN GOING IN CIRCLES FOR THE PAST 30 MINUTES NOW...

I WENT WITH YOU TO PICK OUT CLOTHES FOR YOUR DATE BEFORE...

BUT IT'S NEVER BEEN THIS BAD, RIGHT?

HUH?

IT'S PRETTY RARE TO SEE YOU DISTRESSED LIKE THIS, KAORUKO.

...

IF ANYTHING, YOU WERE HAVING A JOYFUL TIME DECIDING ON WHICH OUTFIT TO GO WITH...

I DO THINK THAT HIS MOTHER AND I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN GETTING ALONG PRETTY WELL...

BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT ME, YOU KNOW?

WELL...

KNOWING THAT I'LL BE MEETING HIS PARENTS COMPLICATES THINGS.

...I WANT TO LEAVE A GOOD IMPRESSION.

SO IF I'M GOING TO INTRODUCE MYSELF TO THEM PROPERLY...

I WANT THEM TO ACCEPT... OUR RELATIONSHIP, TOO.

NOT TO MENTION...

...

Oh my! Waguri-san! Welcome!

Good evening!

CONSIDERING HOW FRIENDLY THEY WERE WITH EACH OTHER LAST TIME I WAS AROUND, I DON'T SEE ANY REASON FOR HER TO WORRY THIS MUCH...

AND THAT'S ALL... THANKS TO TSUMUGI-KUN.

...SHE'S STARTED TO BE MORE HONEST ABOUT HOW SHE TRULY FEELS.

COMPARED TO BEFORE...

I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU...

IT'S REALLY ODD.

TO THINK SHE WAS THIS WORRIED ABOUT IT...

HUH?

IT'LL BE FINE.

...AND IT'LL ALL WORK OUT.

YOU JUST HAVE TO BE YOURSELF...

SO, WHAT OUTFIT WOULD YOU WEAR, SUBARU?

I THINK YOU'RE ASKING THE WRONG PERSON...

Didn't even think of that.

BUT, I'LL TAKE MY TIME AND THINK IT THROUGH.

I WAS SO NERVOUS, I COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE...

...THANKS, SUBARU.

YEAH, THAT SOUNDS GOOD.

SHE SHOULD BE HERE ANY MINUTE...

IS SHE GONNA BE OKAY, THOUGH?

紅が丘 北口
Benigaoka North

SUN-DAY...

I...

I'M...

...TO-TALLY FINE!

I'll come!

ARE YOU REALLY FINE WITH IT?!

We don't have to if you don't feel comfortable.

WHEN WE TALKED ABOUT TODAY, SHE WAS EXACTLY LIKE BACK...

WHEN WE BARELY STARTED DATING— ALL STIFF AND TENSE.

THAT'S WHY I DECIDED...

I'D PICK HER UP SO WE COULD GO TO MY PLACE TOGETHER.

HAVING KAORUKO-SAN BY MY SIDE BACK THEN DEFINITELY HELPED ME CALM DOWN...

...BUT I'M SO NERVOUS I FEEL LIKE THROWING UP!

WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE I CAN'T UNDERSTAND HOW SHE FEELS...

THANKS FOR COMING TO MEET ME HERE...

MORN-ING!

!

Ah!

RIN-TARO-KUN!

I wouldn't want them to wait for us.

LET'S HEAD OFF, YEAH?

HM? IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG?

...

SHE SURE DOESN'T SHOW IT...

I'VE NEVER BEEN MORE NERVOUS!

REALLY?

I'M JUST IMPRESSED... NOTHING GETS TO YOU, DOES IT?

NOT TO MEN-TION...

I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO WORRY ABOUT ME, AFTER ALL!

THERE'S NOTHING MORE REASSUR-ING!

Hee hee.

YOU'RE THE ONE ESCORT-ING ME, RINTARO-KUN.

Huh?! You didn't have to!

I hope I brought the right present with me..

I DID THE RIGHT THING.

THEN I GUESS...

But I want to give her something nonetheless.

Mom's gonna tell you the same thing, I bet.

はぁ

SHINE

IT'S BEEN SO LONG! HOW ARE YOU DOING?!

WAGURI-SAN! WELCOME, WELCOME!

紬

TSUM

OH, GOSH! YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO!

IT MIGHT NOT BE MUCH, BUT I BROUGHT THIS WITH ME...

SOMEONE'S EXCITED...

THAT'S TRUE! WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME, EVEN?

That's great!

BOW

WE HAVEN'T TALKED IN QUITE A WHILE, TSUMUGI-SAN!

I'm doing well!

BEING ABLE TO SEE YOU TODAY GIVES ME THE CHANCE TO INTRODUCE MYSELF PROPERLY...

NO, LIKEWISE! THANK YOU FOR HAVING ME!

THANKS FOR COMING TO VISIT TODAY.

RIN-TARO-KUN AND I...

...ARE CURRENTLY DATING.

AS IF YOU NEED ANYONE'S PERMISSION TO BE WITH KAORUKO THAT YOU'RE ONLY ON THE RECEIVING END.

YOU MADE IT SOUND

BUT THE TRUTH IS...

YOU'VE HAD THAT RIGHT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.

...!

Very much, yes! Because I'm so nervous and all...

Ha ha ha!

Are you hungry by any chance?

O-OKAY!

JUST COME ON IN!

NO NEED TO BE SO STIFF ABOUT IT!

I will, thank you.

PAP

BUT FOR SOME REASON, I'M ESPECIALLY HAPPY...

AND RELIEVED ABOUT IT TODAY.

...TIME AND TIME AGAIN SO FAR.

I'VE SEEN THE TWO OF THEM GETTING ALONG...

EAT AS MUCH AS YOU'D LIKE!

HERE IT IS!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

EVERYTHING LOOKS SO TASTY...!

Glad to hear it!

AND SHE KEPT THE MENU A SECRET, TOO.

SHE'S PUT EVEN MORE EFFORT INTO IT THAN LAST TIME...

It's very delicious!

ARE YOU SERIOUS?!

Although your father can't

I'M TAKING THAT DAY OFF FROM WORK, TOO!

WELL, SHE'S BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO TODAY SINCE THE MOMENT I MENTIONED IT TO HER...

THAT SAID... SHE MIGHT BE A BIT TOO EXCITED...

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT RINTARO?!

HEY, WAGURI-SAN? CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING?

HE'S CALLING ME BY MY LAST NAME IN FRONT OF HIS MOTHER... HE MUST STILL BE A BIT EMBARRASSED.

AWWW

D-DON'T PUT KA... WAGURI-SAN IN AN AWKWARD SPOT!

C'MON! JUST A BIT, OKAY?

CAN YOU STOP WITH THAT ALREADY ?!

THIS FEELS NEW..

NOT HER, TOO...!

SAY WHAT?!

OH, DON'T BE! I CAN TELL YOU AS MUCH AS YOU'D LIKE TO HEAR!

SORRY, WAGURI-SAN.

MY BAD, MY BAD! I JUST FELT LIKE TEASING YOU A BIT.

Ha ha ha!

IMAGINE MY SHOCK WHEN RINTARO SUDDENLY TOLD ME ABOUT THE TWO OF YOU.

YOU REALLY CAUGHT ME BY SURPRISE.

THOUGH I HAVE TO SAY...

...AND THEN HE SUDDENLY DROPS THE **BOMBSHELL** ABOUT YOU GUYS DATING.

I JUST ASKED HIM ABOUT HIM HAVING DYED HIS HAIR...

I MIGHT HAVE BEEN POKING FUN AT RINTARO FOR IT...

AND, YOU KNOW...

...

HIS FATHER ALMOST GOT KNOCKED OFF HIS FEET BECAUSE IT CAME OUT OF NOWHERE.

CLENCH

...

...YEAH.

...

BUT I REALLY AM HAPPY.

INCRE-DIBLY HAPPY...

...

CAN YOU STILL EAT SOME MORE?

CLAP

はい。

OH YEAH, WAGURI-SAN! I WAS WONDER-ING...

AFTER EVERYTHING SHE'S EATEN...?

There's still some chicken. Would you like seconds?

Yes, of course!

Yay!

WOO

ARE YOU SURE?! YES, PLEASE!

WOO

RINTARO'S FATHER MADE A CAKE FOR TODAY, SO...

YOU COULD SEE IT ON HIS FACE THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE MEAL, YES.

...HE PROBABLY SAW HIS CHANCE TO RUN AWAY, HUH? I CAN TELL HE'S EMBARRASSED.

OH, WOULD YOU BE SO KIND?

IT'S FINE, I'LL GO GRAB IT.

THEN I'LL HAVE TO HEAD DOWN TO THE BAKERY FOR A MOMENT. I COULDN'T FIT IT INTO THE FRIDGE UP HERE.

THANKS, HONEY!

REALLY? THANK YOU.

I'LL HELP!

I'LL GO GRAB SOME PLATES, THEN.

YES!

JUST GIVE ME A SECOND, OKAY?

...

I ALWAYS WANTED TO TRY IT SO THAT'S WHAT I DID

WHEN I WAS A CHILD

SURE! GO FOR IT!

...IF YOU COULD GIVE ME AN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION FROM EARLIER.

I WAS WONDER-ING...

YES?

GASP

SAY, WAGURI-SAN?

I'M SORRY ...?

AH, WELL... THAT STUPID SON OF MINE WAS TOO EMBARRASSED TO HEAR IT...

BUT IT'S JUST THE TWO OF US RIGHT NOW, YEAH?

SO, DO YOU MIND TELLING ME...

...WHAT MADE YOU...

...FALL IN LOVE WITH RINTARO?

CAN I ASK YOU SOME-THING?

HEY, RINTARO?

...DYE YOUR HAIR BLACK AGAIN?

WHY DID YOU...

Chapter 75: Mother and Girlfriend

WELL... CONSIDER IT A MOTHER'S HEALTHY CURIOSITY, WON'T YOU?

WHAT... MADE ME FALL IN LOVE WITH HIM?

I'M THE ONE WHO ASKED AND YET I FEEL EMBAR-RASSED...

ALSO! HIS SMILE CAN BE A BIT CHILDISH AT TIMES, WHICH JUST MAKES HIM LOOK ADORABLE...!

HE'S VERY STRAIGHT-FORWARD... AND SO COOL WHEN IT MATTERS...

HE... HE ALWAYS PAYS ATTENTION TO THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM.

UM...

WELL...

I LOVE HIS KIND-NESS...

...AND SINCERITY REGARDLESS OF WHO HE'S TALKING TO.

BUT... MORE THAN ANY-THING...

YES.

IT DOESN'T MATTER IF THEY'RE A FRIEND OR A COMPLETE STRANGER.

REGARD-LESS OF WHO HE'S TALKING TO...?

FOR ME... JUST WATCHING RINTARO-KUN...

...MAKES ME HAPPY.

WELL, I ALWAYS KNEW HE HAD IT IN HIM, BUT...

NOPE, DOESN'T RING A BELL.

IT HELPS ME REALIZE THAT THE RINTARO-KUN I LOVE...

NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT!

YOU'RE ALL CUSTOMERS HERE!

BUT I APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT!

I'M EX-TREMELY THANK-FUL FOR THAT.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

...THIS TYPE OF CARING PERSON.

...HAS ALWAYS BEEN...

AND WILL ALWAYS BE...

...

...IS WHAT SAVED ME, TOO.

AND THAT PART OF HIM...

I... SEE...

AH...

WELL...

KINDA FELT LIKE DYING IT...

SO THAT'S WHAT I DID.

HE EXPLAINED THE REASON FOR HIS SUDDEN DECISION.

PARED WITH THOSE WORDS

WHEN I SAW HIM COME CLEAN, GETTING ALL FLUSTERED ABOUT TELLING US...

THAT HE DID IT FOR HIS GIRLFRIEND WAGURI-SAN

ACHING TO GUSH OUT.

IT TOOK ALL OF MY ENTIRE BEING TO CONTROL THE EMOTIONS...

HE WAS ALWAYS HESITANT, ALWAYS CAREFUL AND ANXIOUS.

WHENEVER HE TALKED ABOUT SOMETHING HE WANTED TO DO...

HE WAS FORCED TO GIVE UP ON SO MUCH.

FROM A YOUNG AGE

BUT WHEN HE EXPLAINED HIS REASONING THEN...

...WITH SUCH A NONCHALANT EXPRESSION.

HE COULD TELL US...

ABOUT HOW AMAZING OF A FEAT SHE HAD ACCOMPLISHED.

...PROBABLY WASN'T EVEN AWARE...

AND...

SHE... THE GIRL WHO HAD CHANGED HIM SO MUCH...

I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN THAT SHE WAS A WONDERFUL... AND LOVELY PERSON.

...WITH SOMEONE AS KIND AS YOU, RINTARO-KUN.

I'M REALLY GLAD... THAT I COULD BECOME FRIENDS...

...I WANTED TO KNOW NO MATTER WHAT.

BUT EVEN SO...

THE GIRL WHO CHANGED HIM INTO A BETTER PERSON...

THE GIRL WHO FOUND AND CARED FOR HIM...

...THAT MADE HER FALL IN LOVE WITH MY SON?

WHAT WAS IT...

...OH.

WHAT? OH!

YES, OF COURSE! WHAT IS IT?

I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME-THING, TOO.

Y-YES?

GACP

!

EXCUSE ME?

...SINCE THE LAST TIME I CAME OVER TO VISIT.

I'VE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT THIS...

COULD IT BE POSSIBLE...

...THAT YOU DYED YOUR HAIR FOR RINTARO-KUN'S SAKE?

...THAT RINTARO-KUN BECAME SUCH A KIND-HEARTED PERSON...

THE REASON...

...WATCHING AND BEING WATCHED BY A MOTHER SUCH AS CARING AS YOU.

IT MUST BE BECAUSE HE GREW UP...

AND YOU, TSUMUGI-SAN.

... IS BECAUSE OF RIN-TARO-KUN..

THE REASON I HAVE BECOME THE PERSON I AM TODAY...

HIS KINDNESS, IMPARTIAL TO ANYBODY, IS WHAT SAVED ME.

I WANTED TO TELL YOU THIS NO MATTER WHAT.

THAT'S WHY...

THANK YOU...

...FOR EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE.

HEY, MOM?

YOU DYED YOUR HAIR BLONDE ...

...FOR MY SAKE, RIGHT?

WHA... HUH?

WHAT...

SO, THANK YOU...

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT...?

I...

...KNEW FROM THE VERY START.

...MOM.

BECAUSE...

DON'T WORRY.

...I'M OKAY NOW!

WHAT ARE YOU TWO UP TO HERE?

I brought the cake with me

!

OH?

YOU DON'T HAVE TO KNOW!

AH! WELL...

THIS IS A SECRET BETWEEN KAO-CHAN AND ME.

You can call me Kyoko, too.

YOU...

DON'T MIND IF I CALL YOU THAT, RIGHT?

FWAP

WHAT?!

Kao-chan?!

OF COURSE NOT, KYOKO-SAN!

...!

You can just put it on there!

AND THANKS FOR BRINGING THE CAKE, RINTARO!

Well, not like I mind...

Kao-chan...? They're already like best friends...?

WOW...!

Shhh!
SAY WHAT?
...
OF COURSE, OF COURSE! IT'S OUR NEWEST CREATION!
A-ARE YOU SURE I CAN HAVE SOME OF THIS...?!
This is just
THANK YOU...!
COME ON, EAT UP.
You too, Rintaro

IS JUST CRAZY.

THIS...

...

IT'S SO DELICIOUS...

I CAN'T BELIEVE...

HE'D MISS OUT ON SEEING THAT KIND OF EXPRESSION ON HIS SON'S FACE.

I SWEAR... THAT STUBBORN FATHER OF HIS SHOULD REALLY SHOW UP MORE.

...

Flower Bouquet

Not too sweet

White Chocolate

Sponge Cream

Inside cranberry Sauce

Cookie Butter Not sweet!

Chocolate white Bouquet

Bouquet Ribbon

...I'LL HAVE TO TELL HIM ABOUT EVERYTHING.

SO INSTEAD...

THAT SEEING THEM I FELT AS IF...

TELL HIM...

MOM.

SO. THANK YOU.

...I'M OKAY NOW!

THANK YOU...

...FOR EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE.

...I'D RECEIVED A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS FROM THOSE TWO KINDRED SOULS.

HUH? MY BAD, I WASN'T LISTENING.

WHERE?

OH YEAH, RINTARO? MAKE SURE TO SHOW HER AROUND LATER.

THEY'RE REALLY HITTING IT OFF...

YOUR ROOM!

KAO-CHAN MENTIONED WANTING TO CHECK IT OUT!

MY ROOM...?!

MY...

Chapter 76: Gratitude

UM...

COME ON IN...

GOOD THING I TRY TO KEEP IT CLEAN...

THOUGH I DON'T HAVE MUCH THAT COULD MAKE THIS ROOM MESSY.

WOW...

THANKS FOR HAVING ME...!

HESITANT

YIKES! THE TOP OF MY DESK IS A MESS! I REALLY WANNA CLEAN IT UP SO BAD!

...

SUCH A... CHARMING ROOM...!

Y-YOU THINK SO...?

I made a lot of mistakes here and there

YEAH. I WAS DOING REVISIONS FROM THE MID-TERMS.

WERE YOU STUDYING EARLIER?

I'M GETTING ALL NOSTALGIC FROM YOU CALLING ME THAT!

Ha ha ha!

AH... KAORUKO-SAN, I MEAN...

!

SORRY ABOUT THAT, WAGURI-SAN. I WAS WORKING ON THOSE BEFORE I WENT TO PICK YOU UP.

WAGURI-SAN?

...HE SPENDS A LOT OF HIS TIME.

THIS IS WHERE...

SO THIS IS HIS ROOM...

...A BIT NERVOUS BEFORE COMING IN HERE...

I WAS...

WHAT'S [illegible] DID YOU FIND [illegible] WEIRD BY ANY [illegible]

NOPE!

I WAS JUST [illegible] THIS ROOM HAS YOUR SCENT ALL OVER...

SO IT'S VERY RELAXING TO BE IN HERE.

MY SCENT...?! DOES IT?!

I CAN'T REALLY TELL MY-SELF...

Does it smell or some-thing?!

?!

?!

WHA...

ドキ
EDMP

THANKS FOR HAVING ME!

THE FOOD WAS VERY DELICIOUS.

ガチャ
KCHAK

I'LL TAKE YOU OUTSIDE.

A- ACTUALLY! BEFORE THAT...

COME OVER WHENEVER YOU'D LIKE, OKAY?

I WILL! THANK YOU!

I...

HAVE A SMALL REQUEST...

?

KREAK

Oh!

KYOKO-SAN! NICE OF YOU TO STOP BY.

It's okay.

I'M GLAD YOU COULD TAKE THE DAY TO REST UP.

GOOD WORK, YOU GUYS!

THANKS FOR COVERING FOR ME TODAY.

FWIP ちぃい

FWIP ちぃい

OVER HERE.

!

HEY, HONEY.

!

HERE WE ARE, KAO-CHAN.

UM...

...AH!

...!

STIFF AS ALWAYS.

...

THANKS FOR ALWAYS LOOKING AFTER HIM.

OH NO! HE'S THE ONE WHO...

I'M RINTARO'S FATHER.

MY NAME IS KAORUKO WAGURI.

N-NICE TO MEET YOU! I'M RINTARO-KUN'S GIRLFRIEND!

BOW

...

THANK YOU.

KYOKO-SAN MENTIONED THAT IT WAS A NEW CREATION OF YOURS.

I APPRECIATE THE CAKE YOU MADE...!

...WAS JUST AS DELICIOUS AS ALWAYS.

AND THE CAKE I HAD TODAY...

I...UM... I REALLY LOVE YOUR CAKES.

I CAN'T REALLY EXPRESS MY THOUGHTS TOO WELL.

BUT, UM... I'M SORRY...

YOUR CAKE'S...

...WITH HAPPINESS.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

IT'S FINE.

I'M SORRY, I WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING, BUT THE RIGHT WORDS JUST WON'T...

...MADE YOU FEEL THIS WAY.

I'M GLAD...

THAT MY CAKES...

OF COURSE...!

...WAGURI-SAN.

COME VISIT US AGAIN...

PLEASE...

Heh

OH MY...

HMPH

IT WAS NICE TO HAVE YOU OVER! BE CAREFUL ON YOUR WAY HOME.

THANKS FOR HAVING ME TODAY!

SHIVER

VICTIMS

I WILL DO JUST THAT!

Ha ha ha!

I'LL GIVE HIM A LECTURE WITH A FLICK ON THE FOREHEAD!

AND JUST LET ME KNOW IN CASE YOU GET IN A FIGHT WITH RINTARO!

BOW

BOW

ALL RIGHT, WE'RE OFF.

YEP! TAKE CARE.

TO THINK A DAY LIKE THIS WOULD COME...

TELL ME ABOUT IT.

I KEPT QUIET ABOUT IT. JUST AS PROMISED.

HM?

?

DON'T "HM?" ME. THE CAKE, REMEMBER?

OH, YEAH.

BUT GOOD THING SHE LIKED IT, RIGHT?

...

RIGHT. YOU ALWAYS WERE!

Ha ha ha!

My bad.

I'M BAD AT CONVEYING MY FEELINGS WITH WORDS.

HONESTLY, YOU COULD HAVE TOLD HER DIRECTLY!

...WITH HAPPINESS.

THEY ALWAYS FILL ME...

REALLY?!

YEAH.

I HAD A HUNCH, BUT COLOR ME SURPRISED.

SO THAT'S WHY YOU ASKED ME FOR HER TASTES AND PREFERENCES...

She's had pretty much everything on our menu.

Hun? Um...

What types of cake does Waguri-san usually buy?

THAT'S A WONDERFUL IDEA!

A CAKE FOR WAGURI-SAN?

I'M FINE THIS WAY.

You might have a point, but...

!

IT'D BE AWKWARD IF HER BOYFRIEND'S FATHER SHOWED UP, NO?

YOU DIDN'T SHOW YOUR FACE LAST TIME WHEN HIS FRIENDS CAME OVER, AND YOU'RE HIDING AWAY THIS TIME, TOO?

I CAN JUST PUT ALL MY FEEL-INGS...

...INTO THE CAKE.

I CAN WATCH THE KIDS WHO CHANGED RINTARO...

...ALL THE WAY FROM THE KITCHEN. LIKE I ALWAYS HAVE.

I DON'T HAVE TO GO ANY-WHERE.

I CAN JUST STAY HERE...

...AS THEY MAKE ME HAPPY JUST BY STOPPING BY.

HUH? ME?

AND GOOD FOR YOU, KYOKO.

SO... I'M FINE WITH THIS.

O-OH, GEEZ...STOP. THIS IS SO EMBARRASSING...

HE KNEW THIS WHOLE TIME, TOO.

HAHA.

!

YOUR DETER-MINA-TION...

IT GOT THROUGH TO HIM, RIGHT?

SPENDING TIME WITH HER TODAY, I ONCE AGAIN REALIZED...

THAT GIRL...

...IS TRULY AMAZING.

HEE HEE

SURELY...

OUR FEELINGS MUST HAVE REACHED HER, RIGHT?

THE GRATITUDE WE FEEL FOR EVERYTHING SHE'S DONE, I MEAN.

Oh!=

BUT YOU BETTER NOT HOLE YOURSELF UP IN THE KITCHEN TODAY... OKAY, KEI-CHAN?

HAVEN'T HEARD THAT NAME IN AGES...

I DON'T MIND, BUT WHY?

LET'S HEAD BACK INSIDE. YOU'RE GONNA FREEZE.

THAT'S RIGHT.

SMIRK

?

...ALL ABOUT TODAY!

Patisserie Plain

I'M GONNA TELL YOU...

THUNK

HA HA HA!

I FEEL LIKE I'M GONNA SLIP AND FALL ANY SECOND IF I'M NOT CAREFUL!

...

LET'S HAVE A RACE, YUZUHARA-SAN!

OH, IT'S ON!

THEY'RE HAVING A BLAST, HUH...

SURE DO.

Chapter 77: Just Having Fun

I LOOOST!!

ALL RIGHT! THAT'S A WIN FOR ME!

YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD ON ROLLER SKATES, YUZUHARA-SAN.

YOU USUALLY DON'T DO STUFF LIKE THIS?

NOT AT ALL! I SOMETIMES GO TO THE ARCADE BY MYSELF, BUT THAT'S ABOUT IT.

YOU'VE GOT A THING FOR GAMES, AFTER ALL... OH.

YOU THINK SO? I'M SURPRISED IT WENT SO WELL DESPITE TODAY BEING MY FIRST TIME.

YOUCH ?!

NOBODY ASKED FOR THAT, THOUGH.

I NEVER FORGET TO PLEASE THE FANS, DUH!

HUH?! WHEN WAS THAT? DURING OUR RACE?!

USAMI-KUN EVEN LOOKED OVER AT ME WITH A PEACE SIGN.

!

WHEN DID YOU TWO GET SO FRIENDLY ANYWAY?

I GOTTA ASK...

YUP, YUP!

SO I PROMISED TO SEND HER ANY NEW ONES, AND THAT'S HOW WE EXCHANGED NUMBERS.

WELL, SHE SAID SHE WANTED TO SEE SOME MORE VIDEOS FROM OUR CULTURAL FESTIVAL, RIGHT?

REALLY CAUGHT ME OFF-GUARD WHEN YOU INVITED US, YUZUHARA-SAN...

BUT WHY A PLACE LIKE THIS?

...sat

AS WE WERE TALKING, I WAS LIKE "I WANNA GO SOMEWHERE TO MOVE MY BODY!"

AND SO WE THOUGHT OF GETTING THE OTHERS TOGETHER.

THIS!

SHE WANTED TO MOVE INSTEAD OF RIDING SOME-THING...?

LOOKING AT THAT, I JUST HAD THE URGE TO GO OUT AND GET SOME EXERCISE IN!

YOU SAW THE PICTURES OF THOSE TEA CUPS THEY MADE, RIGHT?

OF COURSE. IT SEEMED FUN.

AH, THAT?

I WONDER WHERE THEY WENT FOR THEIR DATE?

CAN'T BLAME THEM. THEY ALREADY HAD PLANNED TO MEET THEM-SELVES.

WOULD'VE BEEN EVEN BETTER IF RINTARO AND WAGURI-SAN COULD'VE MADE IT.

AT HIS PLACE?!

SHE SAID SHE'D BE EATING AT TSUMUGI-KUN'S PLACE.

IT'S LIKE THERE'S TWO SHOHEIS NOW...

MAYBE NOT WHILE YOU'RE AT SCHOOL, OKAY?

ABSO-LUTELY

WE GOTTA INTERRO-GATE THEM LATER...

YES?

...HEY, SUBA-RU?

LET'S DECIDE WHILE WE WALK AROUND A BIT!

ANYWAY, WHAT DO WE DO NEXT?

HMM...

I'M NOT QUITE SURE.

IT COULD HAVE BACKFIRED, TOO.

...I SHOULD HAVE INVITED AYU AND THE OTHERS, TOO?

MAYBE...

BUT EVEN SO...

WE SHOULDN'T FORGET ABOUT OUR SCHOOLS' CIRCUMSTANCES.

I'M INCREDIBLY HAPPY THAT THEIR MIS-CONCEPTIONS HAVE BEEN CLEARED UP...

...AND THAT THEY STARTED GETTING ALONG WITH THE BOYS.

...AGAIN SOMETIME.

...HA-HA.

THIS IS A LOT MORE COMPLICATED THAN I THOUGHT.

I DON'T WANT THEM FORCING THEMSELVES TO DO SOME-THING THEY WOULD RATHER NOT.

!

Everything Okay?

WHAT'S WITH THAT GLOOMY LOOK, YOU TWO?!

ZOOM

...

...WE GOTTA MAKE THE BEST OF IT!

BUT SINCE WE'RE HERE ALREADY...

HMMM? WELL, IF YA SAY SO.

I'M SORRY. WE'RE OKAY.

OUR DAYS AS STUDENTS ARE MORE IMPORTANT AND BRIEFER THAN YOU THINK.

TWIP

AFTER ALL...

...HE'S RIGHT.

S-SO WHAT?!

HA HA HA!

YOU STOLE THAT FROM TSUKADA-SENSEI, DIDN'T YOU?

OH, OKAY...

Have to have something to show Kaoruko and Tsumugi-kun later.

N-NO, I'M GONNA TAKE PICTURES AND FILM YOU GUYS, SO I'M OKAY SITTING THIS ONE OUT.

HUH?!

SHOULD BE YOUR TURN NEXT, HOSHI-NA-SAN.

TURN

OH, THE MULTI-COURT'S OPEN.

PEEK

WHAT ARE WE FEELING LIKE? VOLLEYBALL? BADMINTON?!

SUBARU, ARE YOU...

...

SO I GUESS IT'S FINE?

SHE SEEMS TO BE ENJOYING HERSELF...

WELL.

LET US KNOW IF YOU FEEL LIKE PLAYING!

Yeah!

Wouldn't want to get in the way

I'LL STAY OUTSIDE THE COURT, THEN.

Crap! I couldn't get that in time!!

Nice!!

BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG

SHE SAID SHE COMES TO THE ARCADE PRETTY OFTEN... BUT IS SHE ACTUALLY REALLY INTO STUFF LIKE THIS?
And she's good, too!
M-MOST LIKELY...?
THERE WAS A TIME SHE KEPT ON RAMBLING ALL ABOUT THIS SORT OF THING, BUT I COULDN'T FOLLOW IN THE SLIGHTEST...
OH, GEEZ..
AND AYATO ISN'T MISSING A SHOT, EITHER. IS THERE ANYTHING HE CAN'T DO...?
BANG
PHEW! THAT'S THE LEVEL CLEARED!
THAT WAS SO MUCH FUN! THANKS FOR JOINING ME.
KLOK
YOU SURE I DIDN'T PULL YOU DOWN? THAT WAS MY FIRST TIME PLAYING THIS SORT OF GAME.
YOU DID PERFECT! JUST LOOK AT THE SCORE WE GOT!
SORRY FOR THE WAIT, YOU GUYS. ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO TRY?
NOT EXHAUSTED IN THE SLIGHTEST.
I...THINK I'M FINE, REALLY..
...!
IS THERE A GAME YOU WANNA CHECK OUT, HOSHINA-SAN?
HUH?
ALL YOU'VE BEEN DOING IS TAKING PICTURES, RIGHT?
ISN'T IT A BIT OF A WASTE TO NOT TRY OUT SOMETHING AFTER COMING HERE?
...AH.
NO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ME.

WH-WHAT...?

...

!!

START...

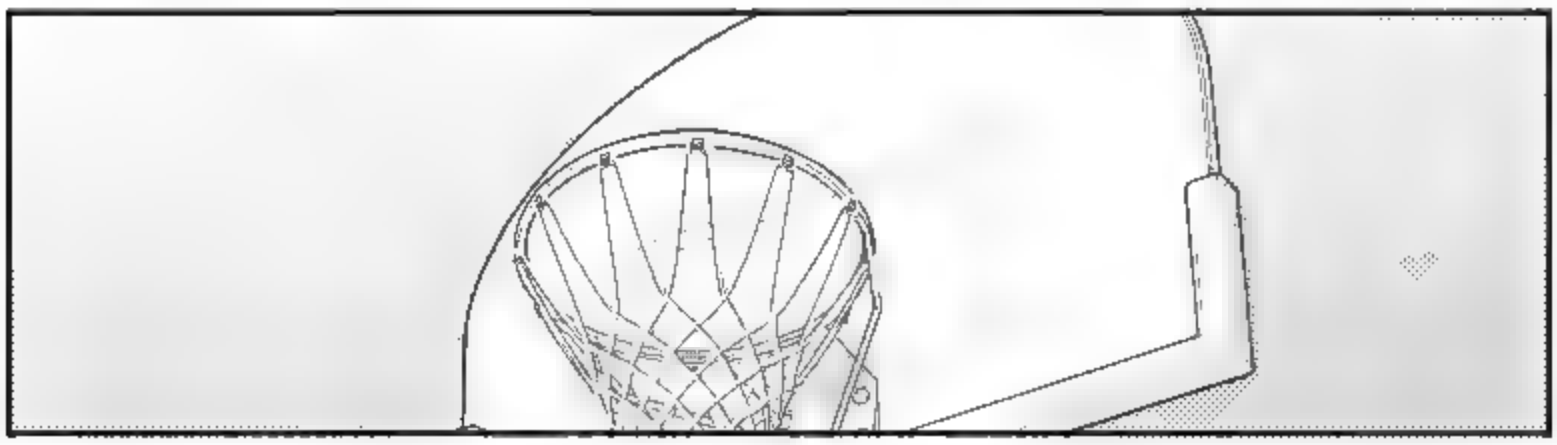
I'D MUCH RATHER LET EVERY-ONE ELSE DO WHAT THEY'D LIKE.

CAN I CHOOSE WHAT WE'RE DOING NEXT?

...?

HEY, GUYS?

HM?



UM ...?

WE'RE PLAYING THREE VERSUS THREE, SO ALL OF US GET TO PARTICIPATE.

HERE.

MADOKA, HELP...!

WAP

!

NAH! WE'RE PLAYING NOW, HOSHINA-SAN!

N-NO! I'M REALLY FINE! I DON'T HAVE TO...!

YEAH, YEAH!

JUST GIVE UP AND LET IT HAPPEN, SUBARU.

...

HM...?

WHAT?

GLOOM

ああ...

BAM

BAM

BAM

BAM
BAM
TAT TAT
WHAM
AH...!
TOT TOT
YOUR REFLEXES SUCK THIS MUCH?!
...!
...
SHOHEI! PHRASING!
SO SHE DIDN'T TELL THEM AFTER ALL...
SPLASH
SUBA-RU?!
OH YEAH... SHE TRIPPED IN SOME COMEDIC FASHION BACK AT THE BEACH, TOO.
ERR... I'M SORRY FOR NOT REALIZING, HOSHINA-SAN...
PLEASE... JUST LAUGH AT ME...

WERE YOU HOLDING BACK FOR OUR SAKE AGAIN?

!

I'M SORRY. I WAS JUST SO... EMBAR-RASSED...

YOU COULD'VE JUST TOLD US!

HA HA HA!

URK . .

'Cause they'd find out

THIS IS WHY I SPECIFICALLY ASKED IF YOU WERE FINE WITH COMING HERE...

BUT I STILL HAD PLENTY OF FUN!

I ADMIT THAT I'M BAD WITH SPORTS AND ATHLETICS...

NO! NOT AT ALL!

...IS WHAT I LOVE THE MOST.

...WATCHING ALL OF YOU HAVE FUN PLAYING AROUND LIKE THIS...

BE-CAUSE...

SO IF YOU PLAY WITH US...

GOT-CHA.

...

LEAVE IT TO US!

...IT'LL BE EVEN MORE FUN FOR YOU, RIGHT?

AND MAKE SURE YOU CAN SCORE A SHOOT, TOO!

WE'RE GONNA TEACH YOU!

OKAY...

OTHERWISE, KAORUKO'S GONNA FEEL LONELY.

30 HD

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I SHOULD RECORD SOME VIDEOS OF SUBARU, TOO...

EAR-LIER...

WHEN I TALKED WITH HER ABOUT AYU AND THE OTHERS...

...

...AND THAT EXPRESSION SHE HAD...

THIS IS A LOT MORE COMPLICATED THAN I THOUGHT.

...HA-HA.

I DON'T WANT THEM FORCING THEMSELVES TO DO SOME-THING THEY WOULD RATHER NOT.

WHAT SHE SAID TO ME...

AND IT ANNOYED ME A BIT.

IT MADE ME WONDER...

WHY EVERYONE HAS TO SWALLOW THEIR GENUINE FEELINGS.

...EVERYONE WAS SMILING AND HAVING FUN.

JUST LAST TIME WHEN WE MET...

MAYBE I SHOULD TONE IT DOWN A BIT...

I PERSONALLY DON'T CARE MUCH IF OTHER PEOPLE FOUND OUT ABOUT THIS WHOLE THING, BUT THE SAME CAN'T BE SAID ABOUT THE OTHERS. AND ALL THIS ALSO BROUGHT MORE RISKS WITH IT, TOO...

...THIS WOULDN'T BE AN ISSUE AT ALL.

IF ONLY...

Even though I was the one who told Kaoruko and crew not to worry about it...

THIS IS TOO EX-HAUSTING FOR ME.

NAAAH, ENOUGH!

...THERE'S NOTHING TO BE DONE HERE.

OF COURSE, I'M PAINFULLY AWARE THAT...

...SO I CAN ONLY COMPLAIN LIKE THIS.

BUT, I JUST CAN'T DEAL WITH COMPLICATED STUFF...

...STOPPED CARING ABOUT THESE THINGS.

IF ONLY EVERYONE...

...JUST HAVING FUN.

SPENDING TIME TOGETHER...

...SO MUCH BETTER...

...THAN BEING AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS ALL THE TIME?

WOULDN'T THAT BE...

MADOKA!

BECAUSE THEN...

...TO SMILE LIKE THAT, YOU KNOW?

...WE'D ALL BE ABLE...

NICE SHOT, SUBARU!

THAT WAS AWESOME!

I HOPE...

AND I GOT A GREAT PIC, TOO!

...THAT ONE DAY...

WE COULD COME HERE WITH THE OTHERS, TOO.